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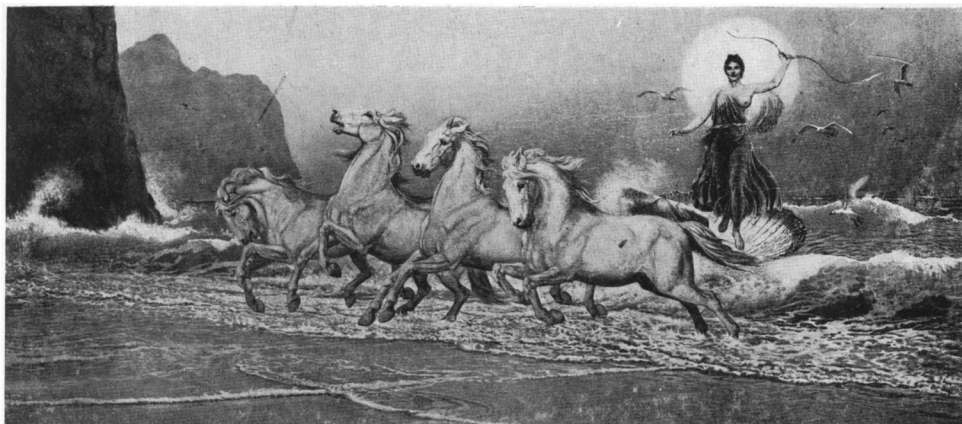
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“DIANA OF THE TIDES”

A NOTABLE GIFT TO THE NATION

BY SYLVESTER BAXTER

ONE of the most significant works in the first exhibition of the National Gallery of Art is John Elliott's mural decoration, "Diana of the Tides." It is temporarily shown in the monumental building for which it was designed as a permanent adornment. It is a most important addition to the very notable list of mural decorations in the public buildings of Washington. Equally significant is the circumstance that it represents the first gift made by private citizens for the embellishment of a public building in the nation's seat of government by mural art. In this public-spirited fashion have Mr. and Mrs. Larz Anderson, of Boston, attested their appreciation of the city that for some years has been their winter home. "Diana of the Tides" is a large painting, 26 feet long and 12 feet high, designed to occupy the wall at the end of the long exhibition-room at the left of the entrance rotunda of the new National Museum. It is an original conception by a painter peculiarly qualified for decorative work by temperament and training. Artistic sensitiveness, poetic imagination, and intellectual equipment are here made effective in thoroughly

grounded technique. "Diana of the Tides" is a striking example of modernity in art; an expression of the scientific spirit of this age in the traditional terms of gracious imagery inherited from classic times with the impersonations of natural forces as well as of emotions and primal passions that characterized the esthetic conceptions of the ancients. The essentially modern aspect of this work appears when we remember that the Moon Goddess of the Greeks and Romans did not include among her numerous attributes the control of the tides. Such a connection was not suspected until centuries later, when Newton discovered the law of gravitation. Mr. Elliott is, therefore, the first to invest the classic deity with this modern power. Most fittingly he has chosen in this connection that unique moment of the year, the time when the hunter's moon rises in the east just as the sun sets in the west. This combines a singularly poetic suggestiveness with one of those fascinating problems in dual lighting that painters take delight in—in this case a marvelous blending of sunlight and moonlight with luminous shadows. In view of the reproduction here-

with given there is no occasion to dwell upon the rare charm of the painter's conception. It need only be remarked that the horses, in repeating and emphasizing the undulating movements of the sea, symbolize the action of the tides governed by the impalpable force of the moon as impersonated by the goddess—harness, reins, and bowstring all actual though invisible. The opalescent coloring, the tender, vaporous development of the work, are peculiarly suitable to the theme. Mr. Elliott is one of the painters whose tech-

nique manifests itself in self-concealment. Nevertheless, he fully appreciates brushwork, bravura, and all that sort of thing in full value. This is evident in the fact that he was a favorite pupil and is a devoted admirer of the great Spaniard, Villegas. Only it is not his way. Mr. Elliott's first decorative painting was the frieze and ceiling for Mrs. Potter Palmer's dining-room in Chicago, and he painted the important ceiling decoration, "The Triumph of Time," for the Boston Public Library.

THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DESIGN

EIGHTY-FIFTH ANNUAL EXHIBITION

IT is curious from what different viewpoints an exhibition may be regarded. The same collection of current work that will cause certain critics to shake their heads and declare that art is going to the dogs will induce others to proclaim that never before has the outlook been brighter. Are the pessimists right or the optimists? Probably neither. The gift of prophesy is given to but few and it is infinitely difficult to read the writing on the wall when one is in the throng. Progress, furthermore, is not always made in leaps and bounds. The great achievement comes out of myriad failures.

There has been wider divergence of opinion concerning the National Academy of Design's eighty-fifth annual exhibition than usual. And yet upon scrutiny, as well as upon first glance, it seems to be a pretty fair show. It includes some very poor pictures, it is true, it shows some of the Academicians to have lost their grip, and, what is perhaps more alarming, some of the younger men to have taken several steps backward, either through heedlessness bred of self-confidence or diminution of power, but it numbers on its lists many excellent paintings—fresh, vigorous, significant—not a few of which are by artists

who are just arriving. On the whole, therefore, a very good average is struck and, though no excuse is given for bragadocio, there is no reason for despair.

It is, of course, unfortunate that there were more pictures found acceptable than could be hung, that some had to be sent back to the artists and that others, most unhappily, were, of necessity, set forth in the room near the entrance, which is poorly lighted and ill-devised for exhibition purposes. This state of affairs, moreover, is, to an extent, due not so much to the overplus of meritorious works as to the article in the constitution of the National Academy of Design permitting Academicians rights of exhibition and exemption from jury. Naturally a lowered standard results, as well as an overcrowded list. And yet the privilege is not utterly without justice. Here is an organization of artists banded together for the purpose of exhibiting their works primarily for their own benefit, not merely for the object of sale but for mutual profit—comparison, criticism. If it were a museum or an association of laymen setting forth the exhibition it would be an entirely different matter, for then the educational aspect would properly be first